

Hudson County Courthouse
583 Newark Avenue
Jersey City
Hudson County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-841

HABS
NJ,
9-JERC,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HUDSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HABS No. NJ-841

Location: 583 Newark Avenue; the northwest corner of Newark & Baldwin Avenue; Pavonia Avenue at west rear
Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey

Present Owner:
County of Hudson, Administration Building, 595 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey

Present Occupant:
Vacant

Significance: The Hudson County Courthouse was completed and opened on September 20, 1910 at a cost of \$3,328,016.56. It was designed by Hugh Roberts, architect, a native of Jersey City. The ground breaking was held on March 21, 1906 and the cornerstone laid on December 12, 1906. The Hudson County Courthouse is considered an outstanding example of the "Beaux Arts" style. Its architectural merit lies in superb detailing and unique murals executed for the building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ground breaking, 3-21-1906; Cornerstone, 12-12-1906; Completed, 9-20-1910
2. Architect: Hugh Roberts of Jersey City, New Jersey
3. Original and subsequent owners; The original owner of the Hudson County Courthouse and still the owner is the County of Hudson, as represented by the County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The property on which the building stands is classified as City Block 523, County Block 1149. The total property was acquired from not less than fourteen private owners of small building lot parcels, then the site of houses. The total property has not been consolidated into a single holding with one deed.

1905 Deed April 12, 1905, recorded in Book 894, page 436,
Lots 7 & 8

Margaret Ginocchio
To
Board of Freeholders

1905 Deed June 14, 1905 Book 915, page 153, Lot 5

Catherine Kinkead & husband
To
Board of Freeholders

1906 Deed January 11, 1906, Book 943, page 67, Lot rear of 40-41
Joseph Bedee

To
Board of Freeholders

- 1906 Deed June 15, 1906, recorded Book 906, page 434, rear of
Lot 40 & 41
Margaret Ginocchio
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1906 Deed June 16, 1906, recorded in Book 915, page 152, no Lot #
James McDonald
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1906 Deed October 24, 1906, recorded in Book 960, page 207, Lots 19-22
William Maxon
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1914 Deed November 16, 1914, recorded in Book 1192, page 595, Lot 7A
Morris Miller
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1914 Deed November 16, 1914, recorded in Book 1194, page 377, Lot 18
Thomas Kinhead
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1914 Deed, November 16, 1914, Book 1196, page 132, Lot 19A
Jessie Chambers
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1914 Deed November 17, 1914, recorded in Book 1194, page 377, Lot 14A & 15
John Burke
To
Board of Freeholders
- 1914 Deed, November 17, 1914, recorded in Book 1194, page 429, Lot 16A
Maud E. Childs
To
Board of Freeholders
4. Builders, suppliers: Wells Bros. New York City, Construction of
Building, \$744,000 ; John Gill & Sons, New York City, Interior
Construction & Finish, \$1,250,000; Art Metal Construction Co.,
Wood and Metal Furniture, \$102,363.88; Cassidy & Son Co., Lighting
Fixtures, \$50,000

Other building contractors and suppliers include: Electrical distributing
board by H. Krantz Mfg. Co.; Cleaner plant by Vacuum Engineering Co.;
electrical contractors were Watson, Flagg Engineering Co.; Chimney of the
powerhouse (which was 125' tall and 5'6" clear diameter at the top) by
J. R. Heinicke; Enameled brick supplied by Houghtaling & Wittpenn; (sub-
contractors of Art Metal Co.); Elevator equipment was Gurney . Granite was
obtained from a quarry at Hollowell, Maine.

5. Original plans and construction: The building is rectangular, measuring about 183' across the facade by 134' deep. There are six floors plus full basement. The rotunda is open from the first floor to the domed roof, with galleries. The second floor is considered the true floor level of the rotunda.
6. Alterations and Additions: The only alteration noted was the removal of two sections of granite from the east front elevation bearing inscriptions. They were located between the Corinthian columns above the frieze right and left of center, and were replaced by windows. Only the center portion, also bearing an inscription was permitted to remain. This may have been done in the 1920s. Only minor changes were instituted inside such as an addition of acoustic tile for certain ceilings and over a court room wall.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Outstanding example of "Beaux Arts" style.
2. Condition of the fabric: Exterior excellent; interior, good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 183' wide x 134' deep; 2 bays; rectangular in shape
2. Foundations: Basement floor is 96' above sea level; underground foundations appear to be brick walls about 26" thick; brick covered with plaster and/or cement; granite construction begins at ground level.
3. Wall construction: Granite, rusticated, typical light greyish color.
4. Structural system, framing: Principal walls of granite; terra cotta noted in composition of interior bearing walls. Roof framing of wood and steel, including steel skylight framing; condition is excellent.
5. Porches: Two minor balcony projections on each of north and south side at second floor level. Main entrance includes broad granite stair about 66' wide. West rear and north and south side entrances have minor stairs and walks. Bronze lanterns decorate entrances.
6. Chimneys: No chimneys on building; steam heat supplied by power house with chimney 125' tall with 5'6" clear diameter at top, built of brick.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: Front entrance: three doorways in entrance complex; north and south side single doorway; west rear single entrance door via exterior passageway from sidewalk. Doors and frames of bronze set in rusticated arch of granite boasting massive ornate keystones.
 - b. Windows and Shutters: No shutters. Windows on first, second and third floor are two small square panes above two large vertical panes. Much

original glazing. Frames of bronze and set in granite; steel bars cover small basement windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat except for false pitched roof around the perimeter of the building which conceals roof equipment and creates an illusion of height. Part of the roof appears tarred; the pitch noted is slate covered; an ornate cupola concealing the dome and the cornice decoration is sheathed in copper.
- b. Cornice, Eaves: This area is made completely of granite, carved and otherwise ornamented. No drainage system was noted on the roof. Condition is excellent.
- c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: There is a single cupola, very ornate, sheathed in copper over a frame base, sided with a crimped sheet metal or copper roof, topped with a classical finial. Some deterioration.

C. Description of Interior

1. Stairways: Two principal staircases of granite with marble balustrades; from the first to the second floor the balusters are of marble; from the second floor to the fifth floor the baluster area is filled with ornate bronze panels. There is a stair in the southwest portion which winds around an elevator shaft.
2. Flooring: Marble; good condition.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls appear to be of heavy plaster cement on a terra cotta base and painted except for areas covered with wainscoting paneling; on the fourth floor the walls feature murals painted on canvas, mounted to the wall.
4. Doorways and doors: Doors are massive but generally plain and of oak. Doorway trim is of marble, and the doorways to the four courtrooms on the fourth floor are heavily ornamented in classical design. Hinges are of bronze. The double doors to the Freeholders' room boast cherub heads above a modest carved trim bordering the top of the panels. Elevator doors are of bronze grill design.
5. Special decorative feature, trim: The railing of the central well in the rotunda and the upper corridors is of marble. There are eight Ionic columns of polished, green veined Cippolina marble extending from the second floor, through the mezzanine gallery supporting the entablature and the upper gallery.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Lowe, David G. Requiem for a Courthouse; American Heritage Magazine,
October Vol. XVII, No. 6, p. 26.

National Register